Indonesian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research

Journal homepage: http://ejournal.upi.edu/index.php/ IJOMR/

Educational and Institutional Barriers to Indigenous Language Preservation in Bangladesh: Challenges and Policy Implications

*Ritesh Karmaker**

Nizam Uddin Ahmed Model College, Mymensingh, Sherpur-2100, Bangladesh
*Correspondence: E-mail: karmakerritesh@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Indigenous languages in Bangladesh are rapidly declining because they are excluded from formal education and public domains, threatening cultural identity and social cohesion. This study aims to examine how educational and institutional barriers contribute to indigenous language loss among ethnic communities. A mixed-methods approach, including surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions with ethnic minorities, teachers, and community leaders, was employed to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. The results reveal that indigenous languages lack representation in schools because of the absence of textbooks, trained teachers, and government support. Communities face cultural and educational exclusion because children are forced to learn in Bengali, leading to high dropout rates and loss of native languages. The study highlights the urgent need for bilingual education and policy reforms. Its impact lies in offering practical recommendations to policymakers and educators for preserving linguistic diversity and promoting inclusive education that supports ethnic communities in Bangladesh.

© 2025 Kantor Jurnal dan Publikasi UPI

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:
Submitted/Received 24 Nov 2024
First Revised 28 Dec 2024
Accepted 12 Feb 2025
First Available online 13 Feb 2025
Publication Date 01 Mar 2025

Keyword:
Bilingual education,
Educational barriers,
Indigenous languages,
Language loss,
Linguistic diversity.

1. INTRODUCTION

The preservation of indigenous languages in Bangladesh is facing a critical challenge as these languages continue to decline under the pressure of sociopolitical, educational, and economic forces. Although Bangladesh is home to a rich variety of Indigenous languages spoken by ethnic communities such as Chakma, Marma, Santal, Garo, and Khasia, these languages are rapidly losing speakers, particularly among the younger generations. The ongoing marginalization is largely a consequence of national policies that prioritize Bengali as the sole medium of education, administration, and public life. This reality has led to the erosion of ethnic linguistic heritage, reducing intergenerational language transmission, weakening cultural identity, and exacerbating social exclusion among minority communities.

Language loss is deeply connected to the broader issue of cultural erosion as languages serve as vital carriers of ethnic identity, history, and traditional knowledge. However, as Bengali dominates formal domains, indigenous languages have been pushed to the periphery, leaving ethnic groups with limited means to preserve their linguistic heritage. The absence of formal educational opportunities in Indigenous languages further accelerates their decline, as children from Indigenous communities are forced to learn in Bengali, resulting in academic underachievement and high dropout rates. Intergenerational transmission of ethnic languages is also declining, with younger generations increasingly prioritizing dominant languages for social and economic advancement, which undermines efforts to maintain ethnic identity within communities.

Existing research has extensively discussed various causes of indigenous language decline, including sociopolitical dominance, educational exclusion, and identity conflicts. However, most studies have focused on broad overviews or theoretical discussions rather than detailed empirical investigations of the role of education in this context. Although some initiatives have attempted to promote mother-tongue-based education, they have largely failed due to a lack of institutional commitment, trained teachers, and proper resources. While some languages have shown minor improvements in usage due to localized efforts, these gains remain fragile without nationwide educational policies to support them.

Although some review papers have analyzed the relationship between language loss and cultural erosion, they often fail to address the specific role of educational and institutional barriers that accelerate language disappearance in Bangladesh. Furthermore, little has been done to systematically examine how the lack of educational inclusion of Indigenous languages affects both their survival and the broader cultural identity of ethnic communities. Previous research also lacks empirical grounding in field data that reflects the lived experiences and perspectives of affected communities, especially in regions where many ethnic groups reside.

The purpose of this study is to analyze how educational and institutional barriers contribute to the decline of indigenous languages in Bangladesh. By using a mixed-methods approach, including surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions, this research provides empirical insights into how the absence of ethnic language instruction in schools, coupled with weak institutional support, undermines linguistic diversity. The novelty of this study lies in its combination of field-based data and comprehensive analysis that connects educational exclusion directly to the erosion of Indigenous languages. Unlike previous works that focus only on general factors, this study specifically highlights the role of formal education systems as agents of linguistic assimilation and explores community perceptions of how to reverse this trend.

This research has a significant impact because it addresses urgent gaps in understanding the educational dimensions of language loss, offering practical policy recommendations

DOI: https://doi.org/10.17509/ijomr.v5i1.81385
p- ISSN 2776-608X e- ISSN 2776-5970

based on empirical findings. By drawing attention to the need for bilingual education, teacher training, and institutional reforms, this study aims to inform policymakers, educators, and NGOs about sustainable strategies to preserve linguistic diversity. Thus, this research provides a timely and necessary analysis of how education-related challenges shape the future of Indigenous languages in Bangladesh. Through the detailed examination of institutional and educational barriers, supported by quantitative and qualitative field data, this study not only identifies key drivers of language decline but also suggests ways forward to ensure the survival of these vital cultural assets.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The decline of linguistic diversity in Bangladesh has been extensively analyzed, with studies identifying socio-psychological, political, historical, and educational factors contributing to language endangerment (Sultana, 2023; Awal, 2019). Socio-psychological causes are critical as indigenous speakers often internalize negative perceptions about their languages, leading to reduced usage within their communities (Sultana, 2023). Political and historical dimensions have also significantly influenced the erosion of indigenous languages, particularly through state policies and dominant language ideologies that marginalize minority languages (Awal, 2019).

The dominance of Bengali as the national language has been recognized as a systemic force that continues to undermine indigenous languages (Rahman, 2023). The increasing assertion of Bengali superiority in educational, political, and cultural domains poses substantial challenges to the survival of non-Bengali languages (Van Schendel, 2022). As a result, ethnic languages have been displaced from formal domains, including schools, media, and government institutions, which has accelerated their decline (Beg *et al*., 2020; Uddin, 2017; May 2023).

Familial and cultural transmission plays a crucial role in preserving indigenous languages, as parents are often responsible for passing linguistic and cultural knowledge to their children. However, the dominance of Bengali within social networks often discourages the use of native tongues at home (Kolancali *et al*., 2024). This disconnect between private and public language use results in the younger generation prioritizing dominant languages for better integration into mainstream society. Moreover, the lack of alignment between governmental policies and affirmative actions has hindered the survival of indigenous languages (Reza & Ullah, 2023).

Educational and socioeconomic barriers further exacerbate language loss. The absence of textbooks and instructional materials in indigenous languages creates significant disadvantages for ethnic children in schools (Islam, 2020). Many Indigenous children struggle academically due to the lack of educational resources in their native languages (Bhuiyan, 2016). Although government initiatives have aimed to promote mother tongue-based education and document minority languages, their outcomes have been limited due to weak implementation and inadequate support (Haque *et al*., 2018). Communities often face challenges in negotiating between customary practices and the demands of national legislation, further complicating efforts to sustain language use. Emotional detachment from native languages among younger generations also threatens linguistic continuity.

Poverty and cultural discrimination further diminish the value of minority languages, making them less appealing to younger generations seeking social mobility (Ali *et al*., 2016; Awal, 2024). Ethnic groups struggle with issues of identity conflict, where competing pressures of cultural preservation and social integration result in language abandonment. Internal tensions and intergroup conflicts among ethnic communities also contribute to the erosion of language identity (Uddin, 2017).

DOI: https://doi.org/10.17509/ijomr.v5i1.81385v
p- ISSN 2776-608X e- ISSN 2776-5970

The phenomenon of linguistic discrimination is widespread, as speakers of non-dominant languages face subordination in broader society (May 2023). This is reinforced by systemic language racism, where ethnic languages are viewed as inferior to Bengali (May 2023). Linguistic discrimination not only reduces the status of indigenous languages but also affects the mental health and social integration of ethnic communities (Faruk & Rosenbaum, 2022). The loss of language is linked to diminished cultural participation, weakening of intergenerational communication, and the disappearance of ancestral knowledge, including unique environmental, medicinal, and historical insights (Reza & Ullah, 2023).

Educational barriers specifically affecting ethnic and indigenous students highlight significant structural problems. The lack of qualified teachers to implement linguistically appropriate curricula prevents effective education in mother tongues. Poverty, family socioeconomic status, religion, and cultural complexity contribute to high dropout rates among ethnic students. Although ethnic minority students may communicate in Bengali to interact with other communities, their native languages remain unrecognized and undervalued in schools. Additionally, refugee children, such as those from the Rohingya community, face extreme educational exclusion due to barriers related to age, gender, religion, ethnicity, and economic status (Hossain, 2023; Rahman *et al*., 2023).

Language education policies in Bangladesh have been criticized for undermining indigenous linguistic rights (Ahmed, 2024). Monolingual education policies focus solely on Bengali, marginalizing minority languages and contributing to their endangerment. For instance, the Kurukh language is under severe threat due to a lack of policy protection (Sultana, 2024). Bilingualism and its challenges among indigenous children further complicate the survival of ethnic languages. Moreover, limited use of digital platforms among ethnic groups prevents the documentation and dissemination of their languages, limiting opportunities for digital preservation and learning (Hasan *et al*., 2022).

The interplay of linguistic discrimination, educational exclusion, sociopolitical marginalization, poverty, and institutional neglect creates a complex environment in which indigenous languages struggle to survive. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts in policymaking, education, and community engagement to ensure that linguistic diversity in Bangladesh is protected and promoted for future generations.

3. METHODS

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches to explore the educational and institutional barriers contributing to the decline of indigenous languages among ethnic communities in Bangladesh. The research was conducted in Sherpur Sadar Upazila, Sherpur District, Bangladesh, a region characterized by both urban and rural settings, which provided a relevant context to analyze public perceptions and educational policy implications on indigenous languages.

A purposive sampling method was used to ensure the inclusion of participants with relevant knowledge and experiences regarding the challenges of indigenous language preservation in education. The sample included teachers, research scholars, local community leaders, and ethnic minority members from different educational and social backgrounds. In total, 197 participants contributed to this study, including 165 survey respondents, 12 semi-structured interviewees, and 20 Focus Group Discussion (FGD) participants.

Data were collected through surveys, semi-structured interviews, and FGDs. The structured questionnaire was administered to 165 respondents to collect quantitative data on perceptions related to ethnic language use in education and institutional challenges. The survey included 16 Likert-scale items, designed to measure attitudes toward language

DOI: https://doi.org/10.17509/ijomr.v5i1.81385
p- ISSN 2776-608X e- ISSN 2776-5970

inclusion in education, policy support, and resource availability, along with closed-ended and open-ended questions to gather diverse perspectives. The surveys were conducted under the supervision of the principal researcher to ensure consistency and accuracy.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 participants, including teachers, research scholars, and local community leaders. The interviews focused on personal experiences and expert insights into the challenges of implementing indigenous language education and the institutional barriers faced by minority communities. Interviews were conducted in Bangla, recorded with participant consent, and transcribed for thematic analysis. Additionally, FGDs were conducted with 20 participants to complement individual interviews and surveys, including educators, scholars, and ethnic community members. These discussions provided a platform for collective insights and reflections on indigenous language loss and educational barriers and were also conducted in Bangla to ensure culturally sensitive engagement.

Data from interviews and FGDs were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes related to institutional neglect, educational barriers, and policy gaps. The analysis involved coding transcribed texts, categorizing responses, and identifying key patterns reflecting participants' experiences and viewpoints. Quotes from participants were used to illustrate findings and ensure authentic representation of community voices. Survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize demographic patterns, attitudes, and perceptions, and quantitative results were presented to highlight levels of agreement, perception of barriers, and support for educational reforms.

The study was approved by the Research Approval Committee (Memo no: RACNAMC/18-05-24.00.04.0007). Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw at any time. All data were stored securely in encrypted files, accessible only to the research team to ensure privacy and compliance with ethical standards. The researcher ensured cultural sensitivity and respect for participants' linguistic and ethnic identities throughout the data collection process.

While the mixed-methods design provided comprehensive insights, the study faced several limitations. Purposive sampling may limit the generalizability of findings beyond the Sherpur District. Self-reported data could involve biases based on participants' personal experiences. Limited transportation and resource constraints may have affected the diversity of participants from more remote areas. Additionally, the study primarily focused on qualitative depth, which may need to be complemented by larger-scale quantitative surveys in future research.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Results

The study identified several significant educational and institutional barriers that contribute to the decline of indigenous languages among ethnic minorities in Bangladesh. One of the primary findings is the absence of educational resources and structured curricula in native languages, which undermines the transmission of these languages to younger generations. Despite the presence of ethnic communities such as Chakma, Santal, and Paharia, schools in these regions generally lack textbooks, learning materials, and trained teachers capable of providing instruction in indigenous languages. As a result, children from ethnic communities are forced to learn in Bengali, a language that is not their mother tongue, leading to lower academic performance and disengagement from their native linguistic heritage (Islam, 2020; Bhuiyan, 2016).

DOI: https://doi.org/10.17509/ijomr.v5i1.81385v
p- ISSN 2776-608X e- ISSN 2776-5970

Survey data presented in **Table 1** reveal that while Bengali is used as the official language in nearly 100% of schools, only about 5% of educational institutions offer any form of bilingual or ethnic language-based education. This reflects a deep institutional gap in supporting minority language education. Furthermore, **Table 2** shows that the national education system, by emphasizing Bengali as the medium of instruction, contributes an estimated 15-20% to the ongoing language loss among ethnic groups during the period from 2018 to 2023. The systematic exclusion of ethnic languages from educational frameworks continues to marginalize these communities.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and interviews reinforce these quantitative findings, illustrating the lived experiences of marginalized ethnic communities. One participant shared, "Bengali has huge dominance over ethnic languages. We can't study in our language, almost all things are written in Bengali even if it is translated into another language, it can be Bengali. The government is not taking any initiatives so that our medium of instruction can be ethnic language or to preserve our language" (Participant B, FGD participant). Another participant noted, "All the books or medium of instruction are either Bengali or English. Like other countries, we can't study in our language, it poses a threat to ethnic people" (Participant C, FGD participant). These testimonials highlight the systemic barriers in formal education that prevent ethnic communities from sustaining their native languages.

Further analysis from **Figure 1** shows that approximately 70-80% of respondents strongly support the establishment of ethnic language schools and the integration of indigenous languages into the formal education system. Additionally, 60-70% of respondents advocate for financial and institutional support to sustain ethnic language programs, indicating widespread community demand for education reforms.

Gender disparities also emerge within the educational and linguistic context. Women in ethnic communities face compounded disadvantages due to both traditional gender roles and language barriers, limiting their access to education and broader participation in society (Hasan *et al*., 2022). The lack of educational opportunities in native languages disproportionately affects ethnic women, curtailing their role in the intergenerational transmission of language and culture.

Table 1. Percentage-Based Significance of Language as a Cultural Identity Marker (2000-2023).

Aspects	Description	Bengali (majority language)	Ethnic (minority language)
Heritage Preservation	Percentage of people speaking the language	~98% of Bangladesh's population speaks Bengali	~2% of ethnic people speak Indigenous languages
Intergenerational Use	Transmission of language across generations	~90% transmission rate (Bengali remains strong)	~40% for all ethnic languages, declining among younger generations
Educational Representation	Inclusion in the education system	~100% (official language of education and exams)	~5% of schools offer bilingual education in ethnic languages
Media and Literature	Share of content in languages	~90% of books, media, and entertainment in Bengali	~5% of print or digital media in minority languages
Cultural Practices	Language use in rituals and festivals	~85% use Bengali for mainstream cultural events	~20-30% use ethnic languages for specific cultural practices
Language Endangerment	The threat level of language extinction	0% (Bengali thriving)	~60% of minority languages classified as endangered

DOI: https://doi.org/10.17509/ijomr.v5i1.81385
p- ISSN 2776-608X e- ISSN 2776-5970

Table 2. Causes of Losing Use of Ethnic Languages in Bangladesh (2018-2023).

Cause	Estimated percentage contribution to language loss (2018-2023)	Key details and trend (2018-2023)
Dominance of Bengali (National Language)	45-50%	The dominance of Bengali in government, education, and media has been the leading cause of language loss. The "Bengali first" policy has become entrenched, reinforced by its presence in digital spaces.
Urbanization and Migration	22-30%	Migration of ethnic groups to urban centers like Dhaka has driven the use of Bengali for social and economic integration, accelerating language shift.
Educational System and Language of Instruction	15-20%	The national education system favors Bengali as the medium of instruction. Ethnic language education is limited or absent, preventing young people from learning or using their native languages.
Social and Cultural Integration Pressure	10-15%	Ethnic groups face pressure to assimilate into Bengali culture for social mobility and access to opportunities, amplified by globalization and digital media.
Lack of Language-Specific Media and Resources	5-10%	The absence of ethnic language media (TV, radio, print) limits usage and contributes to decline.
Intergenerational Language Transmission Failure	5-10%	The failure to pass languages to younger generations is critical, as youth adopt Bengali for education and careers.
Political Instability and Conflict	5-8%	In regions like Chittagong Hill Tracts, political instability marginalizes ethnic languages, though this impact has been smaller in recent years.

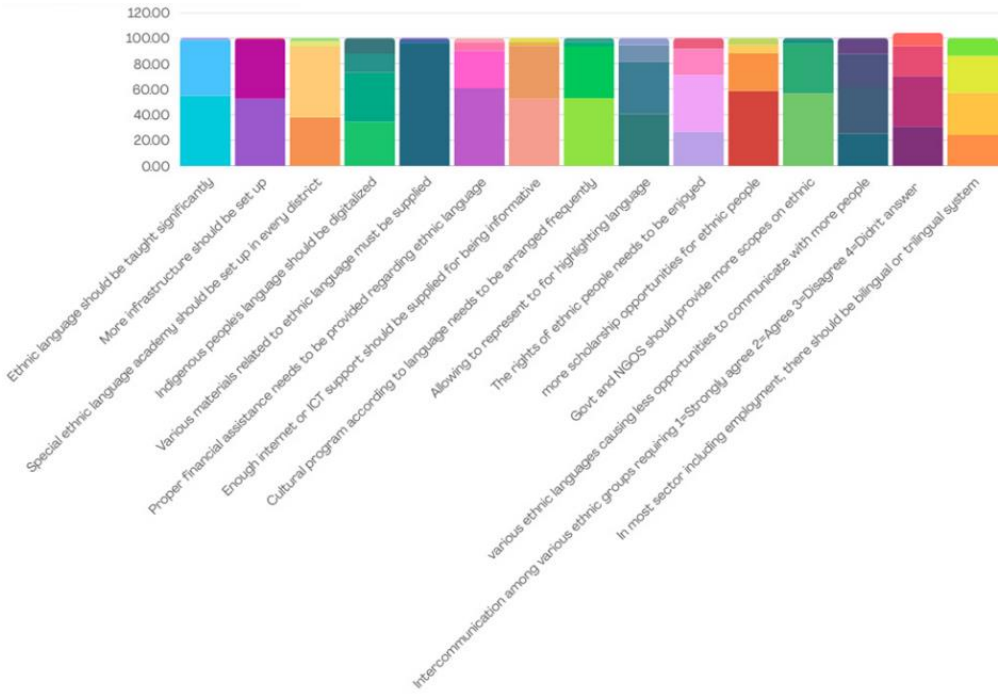
120.00
100.00
80.00
60.00
40.00
20.00
0.00
Ethnic language should be taught significantly
More infrastructure should be set up
Special ethnic language academy should be set up in every district
Indigenous peoples language should be digitalized
Various materials related to ethnic language must be supplied
Proper financial assistance needs to be provided regarding ethnic language
Enough internet or ICT support should be supplied for being informative
Cultural program according to language needs to be arranged frequently
Allowing to represent to for highlighting language
The rights of ethnic people needs to be enjoyed
more scholarship opportunities for ethnic people
Govt and NGOS should provide more scopes on ethnic
various ethnic languages causing less opportunities to communicate with more people
Intercommunication among various ethnic groups requiring 1=Strongly agree 2=Agree 3=Disagree 4=Didn't answer
In most sector including employment, there should be bilingual or trilingual system

Figure 1. Respondents' views on, field data gathered surveying facts about ethnic people's language loss.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.17509/ijomr.v5i1.81385v
p- ISSN 2776-608X e- ISSN 2776-5970

Moreover, data demonstrated the ongoing trend of decreasing ethnic language usage, from 15% in 2019 to only 11% in 2023, showing that without intervention in the education sector, this decline is likely to continue (Ethnologue, 2023). **Table 3** highlights that although there have been minor improvements in the survival rates of some ethnic languages, such as Chakma (from 50% in 2013 to 62% in 2023) and Marma (from 43% to 54% during the same period), these gains remain fragile due to the absence of educational institutionalization (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, UNESCO, Ethnologue, 2023).

Table 3. Survival of Ethnic Languages in Bangladesh: Usage Trend from 2013-2023. Data was adopted from the literature (Khan, 2017).

Year	Percentage (%)					Notes
	Chakma	Marma	Garo	Santal	Khasia	
2013	50	43	36	33	28	Increasing but Bengali dominates. Some local language education efforts started.
2014	51	44	37	34	29	Continued local language education programs in rural areas; urbanization starts to affect usage.
2015	52	45	38	35	30	Increased cultural programs, and local media inclusion; Bengali dominance remains strong.
2016	53	46	39	36	31	Local festivals, media, and educational support boost ethnic language use.
2017	54	47	40	37	32	Efforts to integrate ethnic languages in various initiatives.
2018	55	48	41	38	33	The government has started promoting bilingual education programs to help survival.
2019	56	49	42	39	34	Cultural awareness programs and ethnic language media rise.
2020	57	50	43	40	35	Chakma and Marma languages receive school support in the CHT region.
2021	58	51	44	41	36	More integration of ethnic languages in digital media but Bengali dominance remains.
2022	60	52	45	42	37	Language preservation efforts increase but struggle in urban areas.
2023	62	54	46	43	38	Better recognition and support for ethnic languages, but Bengali remains dominant.

Furthermore, **Table 2** outlines that 15-20% of the total causes of ethnic language decline are directly attributable to failures in the educational system, especially the lack of ethnic language curriculum, materials, and trained instructors (UNESCO, 2020). These structural deficiencies reinforce Bengali's dominance and marginalize minority languages within the formal schooling context.

In summary, the data indicate that the exclusion of indigenous languages from the formal education system, combined with institutional neglect, has significantly contributed to the erosion of ethnic languages in Bangladesh. These barriers not only affect the linguistic survival of minority communities but also undermine their cultural identity, social participation, and intergenerational continuity.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.17509/ijomr.v5i1.81385
p- ISSN 2776-608X e- ISSN 2776-5970

4.2. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal significant educational and institutional barriers contributing to the decline of indigenous languages in Bangladesh. One of the most critical issues identified is the systemic exclusion of ethnic languages from the national education system, which directly undermines their survival and intergenerational transmission. As reflected in **Table 1**, while Bengali maintains nearly 100% representation in education, ethnic languages are included in less than 5% of schools. This near-complete absence of indigenous languages in formal education has caused profound marginalization of ethnic communities in the broader social and cultural landscape.

The failure of the education system to accommodate indigenous languages has been highlighted in prior studies that emphasize how ethnic children underperform academically because they are forced to learn in Bengali, a language unfamiliar to many of them (Islam, 2020; Bhuiyan, 2016). As a result, students face significant barriers to comprehension and participation, leading to higher dropout rates and disengagement from schooling (Islam, 2020). Furthermore, although some government-led mother-tongue education programs have been initiated, their impact has been extremely limited due to inadequate implementation and lack of resources (Haque *et al*., 2018).

The evidence presented in **Figure 1** shows a strong demand (70-80%) among ethnic community members for educational reform, specifically the establishment of ethnic language schools and the inclusion of indigenous languages in formal curricula. This reflects an urgent need for policy transformation to ensure that education systems do not contribute to the further marginalization of these communities.

Another crucial finding is the interconnection between education and language transmission. As noted in **Table 2**, the national education system contributed 15-20% to overall language loss between 2018 and 2023. Schools, instead of acting as platforms for linguistic diversity, serve as agents of linguistic assimilation, promoting Bengali and effectively displacing indigenous languages. This observation is further supported by FGD participant testimonies, including one who stated, "All the books or medium of instruction are either Bengali or English. Like other countries, we can't study in our language, it poses a threat to ethnic people" (Participant C). This statement underscores how education policies systematically deny ethnic groups access to their linguistic heritage, reducing the perceived utility and value of their native languages.

Beyond education, the lack of institutional support exacerbates the problem. **Table 3** demonstrates that although some ethnic languages, like Chakma and Marma, have seen slight improvements in survival rates due to localized efforts, their future remains precarious without nationwide institutional backing. Current language education policies are recognized as distractive and detrimental to indigenous language survival (Ahmed, 2024). Similarly, political and institutional neglect prevents meaningful language preservation (Awal, 2019; Awal, 2024).

Moreover, gender-specific challenges emerge as a critical dimension of this issue. Women from ethnic communities face compounded disadvantages due to both linguistic barriers and traditional gender roles (Hasan *et al*., 2022). This is corroborated by survey and FGD data, which indicate that women, being essential transmitters of language within families, are losing the ability to pass on their native tongues due to their exclusion from culturally relevant education. Hence, the loss of indigenous languages also signifies a loss of gendered cultural knowledge and practices, further undermining ethnic identities.

An additional layer of complexity is the pressure of urbanization and migration, contributing to the shift toward Bengali for economic and social integration. **Table 2** indicates

DOI: https://doi.org/10.17509/ijomr.v5i1.81385v
p- ISSN 2776-608X e- ISSN 2776-5970

that urbanization and migration account for 22-30% of language loss. In urban areas, schools predominantly favor Bengali, and ethnic children growing up in cities often have limited or no exposure to their native languages. Economic globalization and internal migration are accelerating linguistic homogenization in Bangladesh (Van Schendel, 2022).

Despite some community-driven efforts to revitalize ethnic languages, as noted in the Introduction and Results, these remain scattered and insufficient without formal institutional support. Successful language revitalization efforts, like those seen with Māori and Hawaiian, require coordinated efforts among governments, NGOs, and local communities, combined with adequate funding and resources (Faruk & Rosenbaum, 2022).

In sum, the findings emphasize that educational and institutional frameworks in Bangladesh are currently ill-equipped to preserve indigenous languages. This creates a vicious cycle: without formal recognition in schools and public institutions, ethnic languages become increasingly marginalized, leading to reduced transmission at home and within communities. This cycle can only be broken through targeted educational reforms, policy intervention, and community empowerment that recognize Indigenous languages as essential components of Bangladesh's cultural and linguistic heritage.

This study adds new information as reported elsewhere (Sultana, 2023; Awal, 2019; Rahman, 2023; Van Schendel, 2022; Beg *et al*., 2020; Uddin, 2017; May 2023; Kolancali *et al*., 2024; Reza & Ullah, 2023; Islam, 2020; Bhuiyan, 2016; Haque *et al*., 2018; Ali *et al*., 2016; Awal, 2024; Faruk & Rosenbaum, 2022; Hossain, 2023; Rahman *et al*., 2023; Ahmed, 2024; Sultana, 2024; Hasan *et al*., 2022).

5. CONCLUSION

The preservation of indigenous languages in Bangladesh is a critical issue that extends beyond linguistic concerns to encompass educational, cultural, and institutional dimensions. This study highlights that the exclusion of indigenous languages from formal education systems and institutional neglect are among the primary causes of language endangerment among ethnic minorities. Despite some local efforts to maintain ethnic languages, the lack of official recognition and support within schools, coupled with the dominance of Bengali as the sole medium of instruction, has severely limited opportunities for younger generations to learn and transmit their native languages. Findings from field surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions demonstrate that there is a strong demand within ethnic communities for the inclusion of their languages in formal education. Community members express a clear desire for ethnic language schools, bilingual education policies, and culturally relevant curricula, reflecting the urgent need for educational reform. Nevertheless, the current educational system remains a significant contributor to the erosion of ethnic languages, and this situation is further exacerbated by urbanization, migration, and lack of educational resources, which collectively accelerate the shift toward Bengali as the dominant language. Although slight improvements have been noted in the survival rates of certain Indigenous languages over the past decade, these gains remain fragile and insufficient to reverse the broader trend of decline. Without comprehensive educational reform and institutional intervention, ethnic languages will continue to lose relevance and functionality, leading to their eventual extinction. Moreover, the inability of women and youth—key agents of intergenerational language transmission—to access education in their mother tongues further jeopardizes the future of these languages. Addressing these challenges requires urgent and targeted actions at both policy and community levels. Integrating indigenous languages into the national curriculum, training teachers from ethnic communities, and developing culturally sensitive educational materials are essential steps for revitalizing these

DOI: https://doi.org/10.17509/ijomr.v5i1.81385
p- ISSN 2776-608X e- ISSN 2776-5970

languages. In addition, financial and institutional support must be allocated to sustain community-based language preservation initiatives, ensuring that ethnic languages are not only taught in schools but also used in social and cultural practices. The preservation of linguistic diversity is fundamental to safeguarding Bangladesh's rich cultural heritage and promoting social inclusion. Without decisive action, the country risks losing an essential part of its identity embodied in the languages of its indigenous peoples. A coordinated effort between the government, educational institutions, NGOs, and ethnic communities is necessary to create an inclusive educational system that embraces and promotes all languages and cultures. Such efforts will not only protect linguistic heritage but also contribute to building a more equitable and culturally diverse society.

6. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

7. REFERENCES

Ahmed, A. (2024). Distractive language education policies and the endangerment of Indigenous languages in Bangladesh. *Current Issues in Language Planning, 2024*, 1-16.

Ali, M. Y., Chowdhury, M. A. H., Sheema, M. K., Rahim, M. A., Akhtar, M. R., Al Imran, M., Mahatab, M. Z. I., Alam, M. J., Javed, A., and Sarker, M. S. (2016). Problems of ethnic Paharia people in Bangladesh. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 21*(4), 39-44.

Awal, A. (2019). Indigenous languages in Bangladesh: A sociolinguistic study. *International Journal of Applied Research, 5*(9), 318-325.

Awal, A. (2024). Ensuring linguistic sustainability in Bangladesh: Challenges and approaches. *DIALOGICA Revistă de studii culturale și literatură, 6*(1), 38-45.

Beg, T. H., Khan, S., Afrina, T., Hossain, M. S., and Zayed, N. M. (2020). Socio-economic instance of ethnic group in Bangladesh: A Case Study of Dhaka City. *International Journal of Accounting and Finance Review, 5*(2), 32-39.

Bhuiyan, A. A. M. (2016). Indigenous languages in Bangladesh: Loopholes behind the scene. *Indigenous Policy Journal*, *27*(3), 1-17.

Faruk, M. O., and Rosenbaum, S. (2022). The mental health consequences of indigenous language loss. *The Lancet Psychiatry, 9*(10), e46.

Haque, M. S., Al Mamun, S. A., and Anis, M. A. R. (2018). The present situation of minority languages In Bangladesh: A new hope. *Journal of Science and Technology, 8*(1), 137-142.

Hasan, N., Bao, Y., and Miah, S. J. (2022). Exploring the impact of ICT usage among Indigenous people and their quality of life: operationalizing Sen's capability approach. *Information Technology for Development, 28*(2), 230-250.

Hossain, A. N. M. Z. (2023). Educational crisis of Rohingya refugee children in Bangladesh: Access, obstacles, and prospects to formal and non-formal education. *Heliyon, 9*(7), e18346.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.17509/ijomr.v5i1.81385v
p- ISSN 2776-608X e- ISSN 2776-5970

Islam, M. M. (2020). Humanistic values of indigenous languages in Bangladesh. *RUNAS. Journal of Education and Culture, 1*(1), 2.

Khan, M. R. (2017). Linguistic diversity and the threat of language endangerment in Bangladesh. *Journal of South Asian Languages and Linguistics, 4*(2), 150-168.

Kolancali, P., Hodgkiss, A., Mathers, S., Hewitt, E., Nag, S., and Murphy, V. (2024). In between multilingualism and monolingualism: exploring language maintenance and shift among Bangladeshi households in England. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 2024*, 1–22.

May, S. (2023). Linguistic racism: Origins and implications. *Ethnicities, 23*(5), 651-661.

Rahman, M. M., Shindaini, A. J. M., and Abdullah, A. B. M. (2023). Provision of education to Rohingya refugee children in Bangladesh: exploring the forms of discrimination and intersectionality. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 24*(3), 433-445.

Rahman, S. A. (2023). Extinction of indigenous language in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science, 7*(4), 347-355.

Reza, F., and Ullah, M. (2023). Preserving and promoting indigenous languages of ethnic minorities in Bangladesh: A strategic planning framework. *Prithvi Academic Journal, 2023*, 120-135.

Sultana, A. (2024). What about the indigenous languages of the plains?: The case of Kurukh in Bangladesh. *Journal of Language, Identity and Education, 2024*, 1-17.

Sultana, S. (2023). Indigenous ethnic languages in Bangladesh: Paradoxes of the multilingual ecology. *Ethnicities, 23*(5), 680-705.

Uddin, M. E. (2017). Disparity in family status attainment between the majority and minority ethnic groups in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Social Economics, 44*(4), 530-546.

Van Schendel, W. (2022). Rebuffing Bengali dominance: postcolonial India and Bangladesh. *Critical Asian Studies, 55*(1), 105–135.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.17509/ijomr.v5i1.81385
p- ISSN 2776-608X e- ISSN 2776-5970